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THE SYMPATHIZER BY VIET THANH NGUYEN

AND NAGASAKI BY SUSAN SOUTHARD

NAMED WINNERS OF 2016 DAYTON LITERARY PEACE PRIZE

***Delicious Foods* by James Hannaham and
Find Me Unafraid by Kennedy Odede and Jessica Posner Odede named runners-up**

Dayton, OH (October 11, 2016) – A pair of books reflecting on the aftermath of two 20th-century conflicts – *The Sympathizer* by Vietnamese-American Viet Thanh Nguyen and *Nagasaki* by Susan Southard – today were named the winners of the 2016 Dayton Literary Peace Prize for fiction and nonfiction, respectively.

Delicious Foods, James Hannaham's novel of addiction and redemption, was named runner-up for fiction, while *Find Me Unafraid*, the autobiographical love story of two social activists, an African man and an American woman, was named the nonfiction runner-up.

Inspired by the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords that ended the war in Bosnia, The Dayton Literary Peace Prize is the only international literary peace prize awarded in the United States. The Prize celebrates the power of literature to promote peace, social justice, and global understanding. This year's winners will be honored at a gala ceremony hosted by award-winning journalist Nick Clooney in Dayton on November 20th.

"This year's winners remind us that the effects of war reverberate many years and often many generations after treaties are signed," said Sharon Rab, founder and co-chair of the Dayton Literary Peace Prize Foundation. "Together, these stories by Viet Thanh Nguyen and Susan Southard offer cautionary tales but also guideposts to lead us toward a greater understanding of those who are originally seen as enemies."

Nguyen's profound, startling, and beautifully crafted debut novel *The Sympathizer* (Grove Atlantic) introduces one of the most compelling narrators of recent fiction: a double agent in the aftermath of the Vietnam War whose ideals necessitate the betrayal of the people closest to him. Both gripping spy yarn and astute exploration of extreme politics, *The Sympathizer* examines the Vietnam War's legacy in literature, film, and the wars we fight today.

Quote from Viet Thanh Nguyen:

"As a realist, I don't believe in peace. As an idealist, I have to believe in it. We live in bloody and fearful times, but I think back to how, only a few millenia before, our human imagination was once limited to our tribe. Realism meant seeing the world only as far as the horizon. Now we can see further, and our imagination extends far beyond the horizon. Perhaps writers have something to do with that expansion of the imagination, which has occurred while we as a species have collectively groped towards the end of war, conflict, violence, and abuse. The role of writers in these half-blind efforts is twofold. We can portray the worst of what human beings do to each other, and in so doing we can remind readers, and ourselves, that inhumanity is a part of humanity. In the face of that cruel truth, we can also

*imagine the best that humanity is capable of, and in that way provide a vision, a way to overcome the momentum of past conflicts and inherited bitterness, the inertia of accepting our brutality. A strong dose of unsentimental realism, mixed with a touch of wild idealism—that is one way to imagine what I attempted to do through *The Sympathizer*. I am honored by this prize, which recognizes that in writing about war, I was also hoping for peace.”*

Southard, a narrative journalist, spent over a decade interviewing survivors, historians, physicians, psychologists, and archivists for [*Nagasaki: Life After Nuclear War*](#) (Penguin Random House), a powerful and unflinching account of the enduring impact of nuclear war told through the stories of those who survived. The book takes readers from the morning the U.S. dropped an atomic bomb on Nagasaki to the modern day, offering an intimate, immediate account that promises to shape future discussions of one of the most controversial wartime acts in history.

Quote from Susan Southard:

“I accept this beautiful award in memory of the hundreds of thousands who died 71 years ago and in the years that followed, and the countless more who faced the acute and long-term terrors of post-nuclear survival. Their day-to-day suffering is still obscured by iconic images of atomic clouds rising over Nagasaki and Hiroshima, or diminished by passionate justifications for using the bombs. Peace is an arduous endeavor and impossible to achieve without a commitment to understanding the grievous harm our actions inflict on others. My deepest gratitude to the Dayton Literary Peace Prize, to the survivors who trusted me with their stories, and to all Nagasaki hibakusha, past and present, who have fervently fought to ensure that Nagasaki remains the last nuclear-bombed city in history.”

In [*Delicious Foods*](#) (Little, Brown and Company), a widow under the sway of an overpowering addiction struggles to reunite with her young son while held captive on a mysterious farm. Hannaham's daring and shape-shifting prose infuses his characters with grace and humor while wrestling with timeless questions of forgiveness, redemption, and the will to survive.

Quote from James Hannaham:

“The fastest way to promote peace is to increase empathy. Fiction provides an expressway to empathy by allowing us to enter other people's minds and understand their experiences, sometimes getting us closer to thinking someone else's thoughts than we ever believed possible. I am very lucky and proud to have been given the opportunity to invade so many people's thoughts and hopefully steer them towards a more compassionate and ethical world. Many thanks to the Dayton Literary Peace Prize committee.”

In [*Find Me Unafraid: Love, Loss, and Hope in an African Slum*](#) (Ecco, an imprint of HarperCollins), two social activists, Kenyan native Odede and Colorado native Posner interweave their own love story around the tale of their efforts to empower young people – including founding the first tuition-free school for girls – in Odede's hometown of Kibera, the largest slum in Africa.

Quote Kennedy Odede and Jessica Posner

“We are deeply honored to be named recipients of a prize that recognizes the power of the written word to create peace in a world that desperately needs it. Our book tells the deeply personal story of struggle, triumph, and of recognition that there is more that connects and binds us, no matter

how great our differences, than keeps us apart. Our story shows that through the power of love, the world might know peace, and we are thrilled to be recognized in this way.”

Organizers previously announced that novelist and essayist [Marilynne Robinson](#) (*Housekeeping*, *Gilead*) will be the recipient of the 2016 Richard C. Holbrooke Distinguished Achievement Award, named in honor of the celebrated U.S. diplomat who helped negotiate the Dayton Peace Accords.

To be eligible for the 2016 awards, English-language books must have been published or translated into English in 2015 and address the theme of peace on a variety of levels, such as between individuals, among families and communities, or among nations, religions, or ethnic groups.

A [judging panel](#) of prominent writers, including Alexander Chee (*Edinburgh, Queen of the Night*), Christine Schutt (*Florida, All Souls*), Rubén Martínez (*Desert America: A Journey Across Our Most Divided Landscape, Crossing Over: A Mexican Family on the Migrant Trail*), and Evelyn McDonnell (*Rock She Wrote: Women Write about Rock, Pop and Rap, Queens of Noise: The Real Story of the Runaways*), reviewed the 2016 finalists and selected this year’s winners and runners-up.

A full list of the 2016 finalists can be found at: <http://www.daytonliterarypeaceprize.org/2016-finalists.htm>.

About the Dayton Literary Peace Prize

The Dayton Literary Peace Prize honors writers whose work uses the power of literature to foster peace, social justice, and global understanding. Launched in 2006, it has already established itself as one of the world’s most prestigious literary honors, and is the only literary peace prize awarded in the United States. As an offshoot of the Dayton Peace Prize, the Dayton Literary Peace Prize awards a \$10,000 cash prize each year to one fiction and one nonfiction author whose work advances peace as a solution to conflict, and leads readers to a better understanding of other cultures, peoples, religions, and political points of view. Additionally, the Richard C. Holbrooke Distinguished Achievement Award is bestowed upon a writer whose body of work reflects the Prize’s mission; previous honorees include Louise Erdrich, Wendell Berry, Taylor Branch, Geraldine Brooks, Barbara Kingsolver, Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, Tim O’Brien, Gloria Steinem, Studs Terkel, and Elie Wiesel. For more information visit the Dayton Literary Peace Prize media center at <http://daytonliterarypeaceprize.org/press.htm>.

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